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FIRST REPORT ON THE UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SIERRA LEONE (UNAMSIL)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. By paragraph 8 of its resolution 1270 (1999) of 22 October 1999, the Security Council established the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), with a broad mandate to cooperate with the Government of Sierra Leone and other parties to the Lomé Peace Agreement of 7 July 1999 in the implementation of the Agreement, to assist in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants, and perform other tasks as set out in my report to the Security Council, dated 23 September 1999 (S/1999/1003).

2. By paragraph 26 of the same resolution, the Security Council requested me to report every 45 days to provide updates on the status of the peace process, on security conditions on the ground, and on the continued level of deployment of personnel of the Monitoring Group of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOMOG). The present report is submitted in accordance with that request and covers developments until 2 December 1999.

II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

3. While substantial progress has been achieved in the implementation of the Lomé Agreement, the overall situation in the country remains precarious. After the return to Freetown on 3 October 1999 of Foday Sankoh, leader of the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone (RUF), and Johnny Paul Koroma, leader of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), both men undertook a series of visits to meet with combatants and sensitize them to the Lomé Agreement and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme. They visited Lungi on 8 October and Port Loko on 13 October together. Subsequent visits to other sites were undertaken separately due to the increasing tension between RUF and AFRC. Mr. Sankoh visited RUF positions at Buedu, Daru, Segbwema, Makeni and Magburaka, while Mr. Koroma met with ex-Sierra Leone Army (SLA) combatants in the Occra Hills area.

4. On 20 October, President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah announced the composition of the Government of National Unity, comprising 20 ministers (including four members of RUF/AFRC); five ministers of State; and 13 deputy ministers

(including four members of RUF/AFRC). After Parliament confirmed the new appointees, the members of the Government were sworn in on 2 November. Since then, the new Cabinet has met regularly in discharging its functions under the Constitution. However, few policy announcements have been made by the new Government.

5. Also on 20 October, President Kabbah appointed Mr. Sankoh as the Chairman of the Commission for the Management of Strategic Resources, National Reconstruction and Development (CMRRD), and also appointed Mr. Koroma as the Chairman of the Commission for the Consolidation of Peace (CCP). While the two Commissions have yet to be established, Mr. Koroma has already presented his views concerning the organization of work of CCP, which is the central monitoring body charged with overseeing and facilitating the implementation of the Lomé Agreement. The Parliament decided to establish an Executive Secretariat to assist the work of CMRRD.

6. On 22 November, RUF was registered provisionally with the Interim National Electoral Commission as the Revolutionary United Front Party (RUFP) in Freetown. As soon as RUFP meets all the criteria of a political party, such as having a constitution and party premises, the registration will become official. Mr. Sankoh, at the time of the registration, announced that all of his main field commanders will now be in charge of the party's chapters in their respective areas of operation. RUF should now give full priority to its transformation into a purely political party, which efforts would be deserving of support and encouragement.

III. MILITARY AND SECURITY SITUATION

7. After a period of relative calm, the military and security situation deteriorated in the months of October and November as a result of an increase in ceasefire violations and human rights abuses by rebel elements. In early October, RUF moved several hundred RUF fighters from Kailahun to Makeni, the provincial capital of the Northern Province and the central transit point in the north of the country. Makeni, which had been previously under joint RUF/AFRC control, was subsequently attacked and taken over by RUF troops on 15 October. AFRC elements, at the urging of Mr. Koroma, reportedly withdrew northwards. Later, fighting between RUF and AFRC also took place around Lunsar and Rogberi. RUF pursued the retreating AFRC groups from Makeni northwards and now controls a significant portion of the Makeni-Kabala axis south of the town of Kabala, one of the only two locations in the Northern Province under the Government's control.

8. These serious violations of the ceasefire have been condemned by the Joint Monitoring Commission (JMC) and were strongly protested through public statements by my Special Representative. Regional leaders, including President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, also appealed to the parties to stop their military confrontation. To date, RUF remains in control of Makeni and troop movements continue. Efforts to re-establish an Economic Community of West African States Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) presence in this town failed when a company of ECOMOG troops was withdrawn in response to hostile public

statements by Foday Sankah and Sam Bockarie. However, the same company was deployed at Lunsar on 30 November.

9. On 28 and 29 November, an exchange of fire took place between ECOMOG troops and a group of ex-SLA elements, which had raided the village of Pepel, 20 kilometres East of Lungi. A Ghanian ECOMOG soldier was injured and a rebel was killed in the incident.

10. The Joint Monitoring Commission, which has met regularly since July 1999 under the chairmanship of UNAMSIL, has only recently become fully operational since RUF assigned a permanent member to the Commission. RUF also did not cooperate initially with ceasefire monitoring committees (CMCs) established with the assistance of the United Nations in the areas of Kenema, Bo, Port Loko and Hastings, and threatened UNAMSIL and ECOMOG personnel when requested to provide access to some RUF-controlled areas for CMC activities and other tasks. However, AFRC and RUF representatives to the CMCs have now been appointed and will be briefed on their tasks in early December. Two incidents of short-term detention of UNAMSIL patrols by RUF occurred at Segbwema and Buedu as a result of RUF insistence that no movement may take place without its explicit permission.

11. ECOMOG troops have continued to fulfil their vital tasks of providing security at Freetown and Lungi as well as to many new areas in the southern parts of the country. Some clashes occurred between ECOMOG troops and small groups of armed rebels during the reporting period. ECOMOG also continued to maintain contacts with RUF/AFRC field commanders, and provided some logistical assistance to the Government related to peace efforts, including visits of Mr. Sankoh and Mr. Koroma to the countryside. ECOMOG has also provided support to facilitate humanitarian assistance and to assist released abductees and displaced persons. UNAMSIL military observers continued to work closely with ECOMOG in monitoring the military and security situation in Sierra Leone and in the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme.

IV. DISARMAMENT AND DEMOBILIZATION

12. The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme was officially launched on 20 October by President Kabbah, marked by the disarmament in Freetown of a symbolic number of combatants from the former rebel forces and the Civil Defence Forces (CDF). The first phase of the programme started on 4 November, when four new demobilization centres were opened at Port Loko (with separate centres for RUF/AFRC and CDF), Daru (RUF/AFRC) and Kenema (CDF), in addition to the long-standing camp at Lungi. In each area, several reception sites are operational and are set up to disarm combatants before their transfer to the demobilization centres. UNAMSIL has deployed between 12 and 25 military observers at each location and works closely with the Government, ECOMOG and the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID).

13. The initial response to the start of the DDR programme has been very poor. However, after an additional appeal by Mr. Sankoh on 25 and 26 November to RUF fighters at Port Loko and Lunsar, the number of their ex-combatants reporting to

the DDR camp at Port Loko rose significantly, which caused some strain on the management of the camp. As at 30 November, out of an estimated total of 45,000 fighters, 658 AFRC/ex-SLA, 1,469 RUF and 518 CDF ex-combatants have been registered in demobilization centres, in addition to the 1,572 ex-combatants registered at Lungi. Of the registered ex-combatants, 454 AFRC/ex-SLA/RUF and 92 CDF combatants were children. As of 2 December, the total number of ex-combatants registered at the DDR sites stood at 4,217, and the ratio of surrendered weapons to ex-combatants was about 1:4. Mr. Sankoh indicated that RUF might suspend its participation in disarmament in view of the poor response of the other groups.

14. So far, no RUF combatants have reported for disarmament in the areas of their eastern strongholds around Daru. These troops are under direct command of Sam Bockarie, a key RUF commander, who has publicly stated that the troops under his command will not disarm unless Nigerian ECOMOG troops withdraw from the country. He has also stated that he will resist any attempts at forced disarmament by United Nations troops.

15. In spite of the progress described above, the DDR process continues to suffer because of several security and organizational problems. Continuing movement of RUF troops and the fighting at Makeni have deepened mistrust among the rebels, which has prevented the establishment of a climate of confidence which would encourage ex-combatants to enter the DDR programme. In spite of Mr. Sankoh's public appeals, doubts remain with regard to the RUF commitment to the DDR programme. There is also a lack of understanding among combatants about the provisions of the DDR programme, especially concerning financial support and provisions for reintegration, which requires urgent strengthening of relevant public information programmes. UNAMSIL, for its part, has stepped up its own public information efforts in support of the peace process.

16. Recently, there have been several worrying incidents of unrest among the ex-combatants of the Lungi and Port Loko demobilization centres, partly as a result of a lack of information about the reintegration programme, but also because the ex-combatants have already spent several weeks or months of encampment without any necessary financial assistance for modest expenses or to provide for families and dependents who tend to accompany combatants to the demobilization centres. These issues need to be addressed urgently not only to prevent unrest among ex-combatants but also to make the disarmament programme more attractive for those who have not yet surrendered their arms. In addition, it is important to accelerate the demobilization process in order to avoid a prolonged presence of former fighters in the camps. Serious delays could occur unless a comprehensive plan for reintegration is developed and the necessary arrangements are put in place.

17. The National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (NCDDR), the main policy body in which all key stakeholders are represented (Government, RUF, AFRC, United Nations, ECOMOG and donor representatives), has met weekly to review ways of accelerating the DDR process and provide guidance to the programme. As a result, sensitization efforts have been stepped up, and the RUF/AFRC leadership has received strong encouragement to ensure that their forces participate in the DDR programme. NCDDR also set 15 December as the date at which the phase of disarmament of all ex-combatants should be completed.

18. Since the camps at Port Loko have now reached full capacity, efforts are under way to establish demobilization centres at Kambia, Makeni and Magburaka once cooperation from RUF is forthcoming. As the number of ex-combatants joining the DDR programme is rising, it has become apparent that strong coordination and leadership is needed to keep the process on course and maintain a level of stability throughout the country. I therefore appeal to the Government of Sierra Leone, to rebel groups and to all agencies involved to step up their efforts to expedite the implementation of the programme.

19. According to World Bank estimates, the financial support to the DDR programme as of 2 December stands at US$ 5.6 million in committed resources from the United Kingdom to the Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) administered by the World Bank on behalf of the Government and an additional US$ 4.3 million in confirmed pledges to MDTF from the Governments of Norway (US$ 1 million), Germany (US$ 1 million), Canada (US$ 1.7 million) and Italy (US$ 0.6 million). Approximately US$ 15 million has been made available in parallel or co-financing support, including US$ 7 million from the World Bank through a community reintegration and rehabilitation project, US$ 3.5 million from DFID for camp management, a proposal for US$ 2.7 million from WFP for the feeding of encamped ex-combatants and a US$ 2 million appeal for activities aimed at child ex-combatants in the year 2000. The Government of Japan has made US$ 1 million available for DDR activities through the United Nations trust fund. While the contributions made are encouraging signs of the international community's commitment to help the Sierra Leonean people, I should like to reiterate my strong appeal to donors to contribute to the World Bank MDTF in order to meet the total of US$ 50 million needed for the DDR process.

V. HUMAN RIGHTS

20. The human rights situation in Sierra Leone has also deteriorated markedly in recent weeks. Since early October 1999, there has been an escalation of attacks on civilians by former rebel elements in the areas west of the Occra Hills, along the Lungi-Port Loko road, as well as around Kabala and in parts of Koinadugu. The attacks frequently involve rape, abduction and harassment, in addition to looting and destruction of property. The frequency of attacks on civilians continues to impede freedom of movement in many locations and to prompt the displacement of people.

21. In particular, fighting between RUF and ex-SLA elements at Makeni, Lunsar and in other northern areas has resulted in serious abuses of the rights of the affected civilian communities. During the clashes at Makeni and Lunsar a number of civilians were killed, women were raped and there was widespread looting, including of the property of humanitarian organizations. In October, a group of some 40 humanitarian workers were prevented by RUF elements from leaving Makeni for four days. Reports received in recent weeks from Makeni and Lunsar, as well as from other locations under RUF control, such as Magburaka and Fadugu, suggest that the remaining civilian populations are subject to a harsh system of civil control, with severe punishments, including execution or threat of execution for those accused of offences, and the imposition of arduous food levies. Both national and international staff of humanitarian organizations have been subjected to threats and intimidation. One organization was obliged to cease

operating in Makeni following threats against its personnel delivered by Mr. Sankoh and senior RUF personnel on 15 November.

22. Commitments entered into under the Lomé Agreement and subsequent reaffirmation notwithstanding, both RUF and AFRC have shown great reluctance to release adult and child abductees. Only some 1,000 adults and children have been released so far. Considerable numbers are still in captivity. For instance, more than 2,000 children are registered as missing from the Western Area since the rebel incursion of January 1999. Child fighters, including abductees, were still being sent into combat as recently as October, when a number of 15-year-old boys were injured in combat with other AFRC elements.

23. Commendable efforts are being made to establish an effective and democratic police force in Sierra Leone. The newly appointed Inspector General of the national police has initiated a number of important human rights-related investigations and is promoting the development of enhanced human rights sensitivity within the force. The United Nations is redeploying a small team of civil police advisers, who will coordinate with other international efforts to advise the Government of Sierra Leone and local police officials on police practice, training, re-equipment and recruitment.

24. UNAMSIL is also working closely with consultants provided by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to facilitate the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Human Rights Commission, both of which are to be set up pursuant to the provisions of the Lomé Agreement. At the request of the Government, the Office of the High Commissioner is developing draft statutes for these Commissions which will be presented to the Government of Sierra Leone. The Office has also commissioned a consultant to study the nexus between the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and a possible international commission of inquiry into human rights violations.

VI. HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

25. Deteriorating security conditions throughout the country have reversed gains in access and prevented further expansion of humanitarian activity despite commitments by all parties of the Lomé Agreement to allow unhindered access countrywide. In particular, during the October RUF/AFRC clashes at Makeni, humanitarian agencies were targeted for looting and harassment. Much of the stolen property has not yet been returned. A further result of the fighting has been the displacement of more than 1,500 civilians to Kabala and the suspension of assistance to vulnerable groups. Disturbingly high rates of malnutrition previously assessed in other areas of the northern and eastern provinces remain unaddressed.

26. Humanitarian organizations attempting to re-establish programme activities in the area of Makeni following the October clashes have been forced to withdraw due to threats and harassment by RUF commanders. In addition, on 17 November a vehicle belonging to an international NGO was ambushed along the Port Loko-Lungi highway. Its occupants were abducted and badly treated. Regular attacks on villages in this area have led to an increase of internally displaced persons

along the Port Loko-Lungi axis. However, insecurity along the highway continues to impede the delivery of humanitarian supplies.

27. Attempts to gain access into these areas continue, including efforts to upgrade roads to allow for large-scale food distributions and other programmes in the Eastern Province. It is obvious that without sustained and convincing action by AFRC and RUF leaders to stem these incidents, the delivery of humanitarian assistance beyond the western area and southern provinces will remain extremely difficult. The deterioration of the security situation has also stalled plans to commence monitoring and assistance to internally displaced persons and returnees.

28. From 7 to 11 November, a multi-donor mission led by Caroline McAskie, Officer-in-Charge of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, visited Sierra Leone and Guinea to determine how best the international donor community could support the peace process. In addition to exploring support for the DDR programme, the mission's findings highlighted the need for a swift and vigorous humanitarian response if access increases dramatically, as well as immediate reintegration programmes for ex-combatants in tandem with support to Sierra Leonean communities. The Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for the year 2000, launched on 23 November at Geneva, requests $71 million in support of humanitarian activities.

VII. DEPLOYMENT OF UNAMSIL

29. In line with Security Council resolution 1260 (1999) of 20 August 1999, the civilian component of UNAMSIL is being strengthened with the deployment of additional political affairs and human rights officers, as well as the establishment of public information and civil affairs sections. The chief civil affairs officer has arrived in Freetown and has begun developing the programme of work, which should have its offices throughout the country. A senior Child Protection Adviser will be deployed shortly to ensure adequate and sustained attention to child rights and protection.

30. More than 200 military observers and a 15-member medical team are currently deployed at mission headquarters at Freetown, Hastings, Lungi, Port Loko, Bo, Kenema and Daru. Immediately after the adoption of Security Council resolution 1270 (1999), a United Nations technical team was dispatched to Sierra Leone in late October to assist the Observer Mission in preparing for the deployment of the mandated 6,000 United Nations troops. Despite the very tight timetable, preparation for the deployment of military contingents has progressed effectively, partly as a result of the excellent cooperation provided by the Government of Sierra Leone. By mid-November, reconnaissance parties from India and Kenya for the deployment of their troops had completed their tasks, and had drawn up plans for the deployment of the Indian and Kenyan battalions in Koidu/Kailahun and Makeni/Magburaka by December. The final decisions on deployment of various contingents will take into account security conditions on the ground. Meanwhile, the first contingent of 130 Kenyan troops arrived at Freetown on 29 November. Active preparations continue for the deployment of troops and military observers made available to UNAMSIL by the Governments of Nigeria, Ghana and Guinea. The Secretariat believes that it will be crucial to

expedite the deployment of these military personnel. A status of forces agreement is being finalized at Headquarters and will shortly be submitted to the Government of Sierra Leone.

31. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the United Nations country team have continued to work on developing the modalities for the implementation of the strategic framework for Sierra Leone. An initial draft plan for the strategic framework approach is expected to be completed by the end of December.

32. On 19 November, I appointed Oluyemi Adeniji (Nigeria) as my Special Representative in Sierra Leone. Mr. Adeniji has most recently served as my Special Representative for the Central African Republic. I have also appointed Major-General Vijay Kumar Jetley (India) as Force Commander of UNAMSIL. Both men are expected to assume their duties at Freetown in the first half of December. I would like to pay special tribute to my outgoing Special Representative, Francis Okelo, who has discharged his duties under often very difficult conditions, and I am most grateful for his leadership during the peace process which included the signing of the Lomé Agreement.

VIII. OBSERVATIONS

33. Undeniably, some progress has been made in the implementation of the Lomé Agreement with the return of the RUF and AFRC leadership to Sierra Leone, the establishment of the Government of National Unity, the provisional registration of RUF as a political party, and a recent increase of the number of ex-combatants registering for the DDR programme.

34. However, serious human rights abuses, ceasefire violations, including fighting between RUF and AFRC, extensive movement of troops and weapons by the former and the targeting of humanitarian personnel give cause for very serious concern. The continued violence against the people of Sierra Leone and international personnel is unacceptable and perpetrators should expect to be held accountable for their actions. The RUF and AFRC leadership as well as all their local commanders should prove by their actions that they are indeed committed to the peace process, in particular to the complete cessation of hostilities and international human rights standards and humanitarian law, including the release of all abductees as specified in the Lomé Agreement.

35. Despite some improvements, the humanitarian crisis in Sierra Leone continues unabated. In addition, some national and international humanitarian personnel have suffered harassment, assault and even detention at the hands of the former rebel forces. The Lomé Peace Agreement clearly commits all former parties to the conflict to providing safe and unhindered access for humanitarian interventions. Yet the delivery of assistance continues to be obstructed by arbitrary clearance procedures and threats. This should stop.

36. While the United Nations expedites the deployment of its troops in Sierra Leone, ECOMOG is expected to continue to play a critical role in providing national security functions as well as assisting the DDR process, as envisaged in the Lomé Agreement. To this end, it will be required to maintain a credible

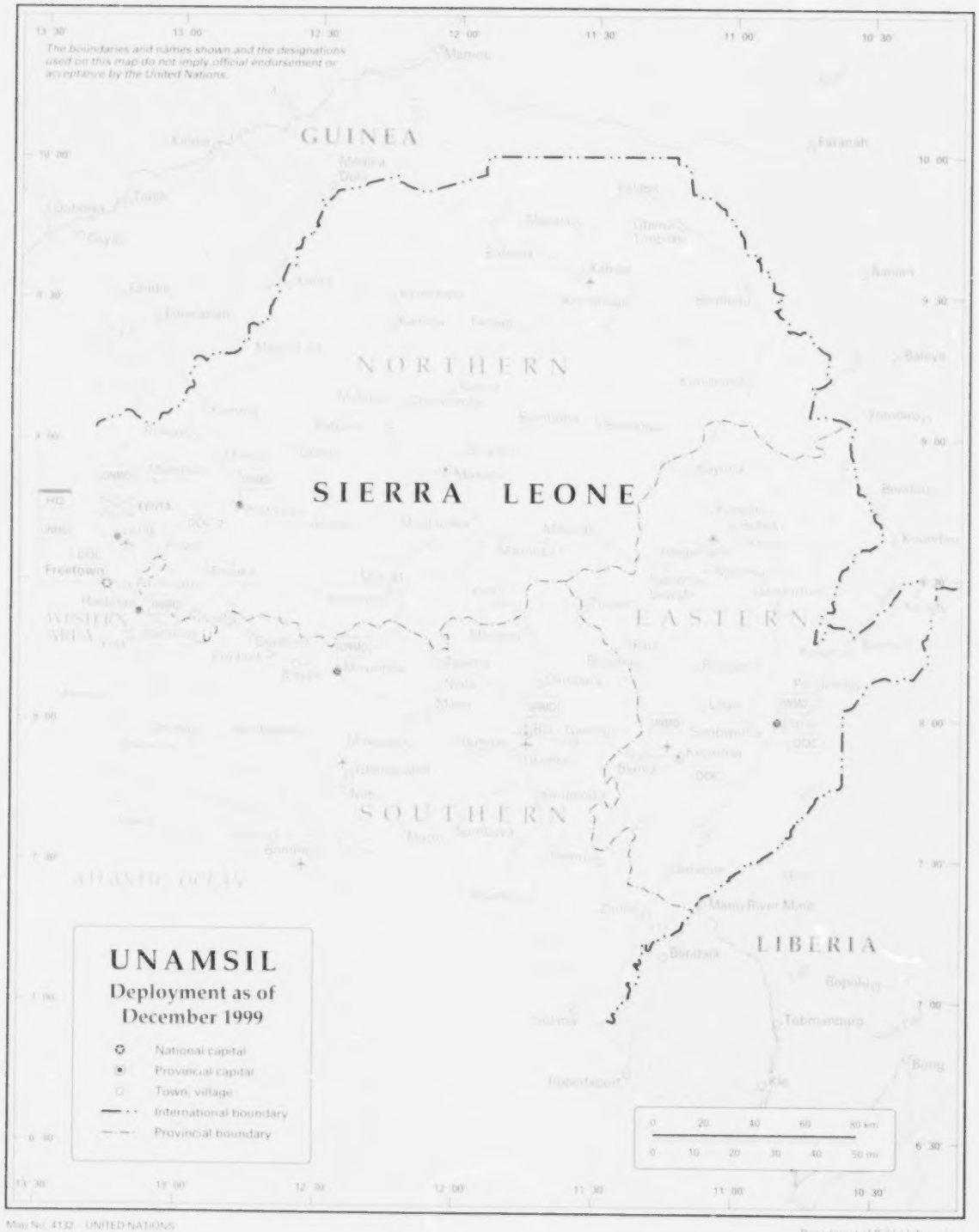
force of several thousand troops. I would like to commend ECOMOG, once again, for its continued efforts in support of the Government and people of Sierra Leone. I therefore would like to renew my strong appeal to donors to provide ECOMOG with much-needed support in order to allow it the means to effectively perform its indispensable tasks.

37. I also should like to express my appreciation for the important involvement of regional leaders in the Sierra Leonean peace process, and I should like to encourage them to continue to support the efforts of the Government of Sierra Leone, the international community and other stakeholders to bring peace to this battered country.

38. There is also an urgent need to strengthen and accelerate the process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants and to enhance the coordination of these crucial activities. I welcome the progress made by the Government of Sierra Leone and the invaluable contributions of the donor community, especially the Government of the United Kingdom and the World Bank, in establishing the necessary demobilization facilities. I encourage all concerned to continue their efforts to build confidence among the parties, increase awareness of the procedures and benefits of the DDR programme and improve the links between the various steps in the programme. I have already asked UNAMSIL to step up its efforts in support of these crucial aspects of the peace process.

39. The commitments of the parties to the Lomé Agreement will be put to the test in the coming crucial period. Now that the main mechanisms for ceasefire monitoring and disarmament are in place, the responsibility rests with the leaders of the rebel movements to advance the peace process in Sierra Leone. The rebel movements now take part in the Government and should work in it towards a durable peace. I believe that any efforts in this regard will meet with the support of the international community. The United Nations, in close cooperation with ECOMOG, stands ready to do its part.

40. I should like, once again, to express my appreciation to my Special Representative, Francis Okelo, to the Chief Military Observer, Brigadier-General Subhash C. Joshi, and to all the military and civilian personnel of UNAMSIL for their unwavering commitment and efforts under difficult circumstances.



Map No. 4132 - UNITED NATIONS
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